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HOUSE JOINT RESOLUTION 529
By West

A RESOLUTION to honor the Grand Ole Opry and its members,
past and present, on being recognized by the
Donelson-Hermitage Chamber of Commerce.

WHEREAS, it is fitting that the members of this General Assembly should pause to
specially recognize those estimable organizations and individuals whose contributions to the
music industry have distinguished this great state the world over; and

WHEREAS, as part of its Annual Star Spangled Salute to recognize area businesses,
the Donelson-Hermitage Chamber of Commerce has decided to honor the Grand Ole Opry
along with the Opry's members, past and present, for their contributions to the music industry
and to Nashville; and

WHEREAS, it all began on the night of November 28, 1925, when a young announcer
on Nashville radio station WSM introduced an 80-year-old fiddle player, Uncle Jimmy
Thompson, as the first performer on a new show called "The WSM Barn Dance"; and

WHEREAS, announcer George D. Hay, who labeled himself "The Solemn Old Judge,"
but was neither old nor a judge, realized he had started a good thing; and

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WHEREAS, now, almost 75 years later, the show Hay started is still going strong; it became the foundation for a huge entertainment resort, Opryland, and led the way for Nashville to become the famed Music City; and

WHEREAS, the acclaimed show followed an NBC network radio program on Saturday nights called “The Music Appreciation Hour,” and in 1928 Hay announced, “For the past hour we have been listening to music taken largely from the Grand Opera, but now we will present ‘The Grand Ole Opry’”; the name stuck and the rest is history; and

WHEREAS, crowds of people came to the studio and stood in corridors just to be where the show originated; WSM decided to move the Opry to its own home, Studio C, so the reactions of an enthusiastic audience of 500 fans could add to the program; and

WHEREAS, the crowds kept growing, and the Opry was forced to move once again, this time to the Hillsboro Theatre in southeast Nashville and then to the Dixie Tabernacle; and

WHEREAS, in July 1939, the newly constructed War Memorial Auditorium in downtown Nashville became the new home; an admission fee of 25 cents was imposed to curb the crowds, but it failed to deter anyone; and

WHEREAS, once again the Opry moved, this time to the Ryman Auditorium and became home for three decades with seating for 3,000 and two scheduled showings on Saturday nights; fans came to see the likes of the Gully Jumpers, the Fruit Jar Drinkers, and the Crook Brothers; and

WHEREAS, it was not until 1938 when singing found its place with the instrumental music the Opry had known up to that point, as Roy Acuff and the Smoky Mountain Boys filled the Ryman with songs such as “The Wabash Cannonball” and “The Great Speckled Bird”; and

WHEREAS, in 1939, the NBC Radio Network began carrying a portion of the Opry as a network show; during the 1940s and 1950s, headliners such as Lester Flatt, Earl Scruggs, Hank Snow, Marty Robbins, Ray Price, Grandpa Jones, George Morgan, Kitty Wells, Johnny Cash, and Porter Wagoner became favorites across the country; and

WHEREAS, the elite group of members at the Grand Ole Opry saw the addition of Loretta Lynn, Bill Anderson, Dottie West, Connie Smith, Jack Greene, and Jim Ed Brown in the 1960s; and

WHEREAS, while the Opry's popularity remained solid, the Ryman deteriorated and brought about another move; and

WHEREAS, the final destination was the Grand Ole Opry House, a 4,400-seat auditorium that became the centerpiece of the Opryland entertainment resort, joined by the Opryland Hotel, the General Jackson Showboat, the Springhouse Golf Club, the facilities of WSM-AM and WSM-FM and CMT International; they are together part of the Gaylord Entertainment Company; and

WHEREAS, the Opry said goodbye to the Ryman on March 15, 1974; the next night President Nixon joined Roy Acuff on stage at the Grand Old Opry House where an eight-foot circle of hardwood, taken from the Ryman, was placed center stage; and

WHEREAS, the magic continues, and the Opry now counts 70 acts as members of the current cast that makes up the Opry family; thousands of people make pilgrimages every year to see and hear them; and

WHEREAS, Opry General Manager Pete Fisher stated, "The Grand Ole Opry celebrates the diversity of all the musical styles under the country music umbrella. In addition, the Opry presents the many generations of artists who have formed country music's rich legacy and continues to forge its future course"; and

WHEREAS, this General Assembly finds it appropriate to pause in its deliberations to acknowledge and applaud the Grand Ole Opry and its remarkable members for their countless contributions to the music industry, to the city of Nashville, and to this Volunteer State; now, therefore,

BE IT RESOLVED BY THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES OF THE ONE HUNDRED FIRST GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF THE STATE OF TENNESSEE, THE SENATE

CONCURRING, That we hereby recognize the Grand Ole Opry and its members, past and present, and commend them upon being honored by the Donelson-Hermitage Chamber of Commerce.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, That an appropriate copy of this resolution be prepared for presentation with this final clause omitted from such copy.